

S E C R E T

DCI BRIEFING

19 May 1961

EL SALVADOR

I. El Salvador's strongly anti-Communist provisional regime is controlled by army officers vigorously committed to basic socio-economic reform program.

- A. Gulf between wealthy few and impoverished majority in El Salvador probably is greater than in any other Latin American country.
- B. El Salvador's three-month experience with Communist-influenced regime overthrown by present government leaders last January jolted many Salvadorans into recognition that reforms must be implemented quickly to stem Communist gains.

II. Armed forces officers on active duty appear, at least on surface, united in support of government's program.

- A. Dominant officer group is composed largely of relatively young and mid-grade officers.

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III. Last month's government changes eliminating certain officials not wholly supporting reform program reduced ruling civil-military directorate to three members, and reshuffled cabinet.

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[Redacted]

B. Although regime voices its intention to relinquish power to elected government by end of year, armed forces are unlikely to give up control until reform program seems assured.

IV. First reforms--reduction in rents for low-income housing and paid day of rest on Sundays for agricultural workers--aroused considerable upper class resistance which government is seeking to counter.

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A. [Redacted], which also is promoting reforms, recently described upper classes as "stunned" by reversal of historic position of army and church, which had been their traditional allies.

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